



**VAAL UNIVERSITY
OF TECHNOLOGY**

SPRING GRADUATIONS 2024

Special Publication



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Note from the Editor

Welcome to our Spring Graduations Special Publication.



It is with great pride and a sense of continuity that we present to you the second edition of our Graduations Special Publication, following its successful launch in April this year after the SPRING graduation season which you can read [HERE](#).

This publication was born out of our desire to honor the incredible achievements of our graduates and their transformative journeys at VUT. Additionally, the publication aims to showcase graduates' stories of triumph, overcoming adversity, breaking barriers and conventions, as well as inspiring future generations. As I previously mentioned, these are not merely stories for their own sake – each one highlights our institution's educational heritage and tradition. Not only does the publication pay tribute to the graduates, but also a salute to the staff, families, and communities who have supported them every step of the way.

Before you dive into this edition, we wish to sincerely apologize for the delay in releasing it, we truly understand the anticipation and excitement – the team has been working diligently to ensure that it meets the high standards you deserve. While this edition is not as thick as the previous one, it is still crammed full of engaging content, brimming with must-read articles and exciting features, and we are therefore confident that it is worth the wait.

This instalment focuses on the recent Spring Graduations held from 16 – 18 September 2024 at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall which saw a total number of 1 194 of graduates from various disciplines across the university's four faculties, donning their caps and gowns in a momentous occasion filled with pride and anticipation for the future. Of special highlight is that for the first time in VUT's history, we proudly incorporated sign language interpretation into our graduation ceremonies and all graduation programs were not only available in English but were also translated

into Sesotho and Sepedi.. These notable inclusions are testament to VUT's ongoing commitment to ensuring that every graduate, guest, and family member could fully experience and celebrate this momentous occasion. At VUT, we continue to break barriers and strive to create an even more inclusive academic environment.

As I conclude, I must confess that penning this note felt deeply personal and was such a bittersweet moment for me. Bitter because it is my last at VUT, but sweet because, I too, just like graduates, am preparing to turn a new page in my own journey. Simply put, by the time you read this, I probably would've ceased to be in the employ of VUT, marking the end of a meaningful chapter in my life. Over and above everything else, it has been an incredible journey characterized by personal and professional growth that one can be proud of.

As I bid farewell to VUT and being at the helm of the university's corporate communication machinery, I would like to take a moment to thank the incredible team with whom we've co-created some magic. Ours was to try and reimagine how VUT communicates with its diverse stakeholder groups – to that effect, we have some small wins to show for it but equally admit that there is certainly room for improvement. I therefore implore you to feel free to share your thoughts and ideas with the department for the betterment of its service offering.

Happy reading, and please don't forget to puff and pass!

Yours,

Dumile Mlambo
Head of Department: Corporate Communication



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20

celebrating 20 years as a UoT

Vaal University of Technology celebrates 20 Years of excellence

The journey

The year 2024 marks exactly 20 years of the existence of the Vaal University of Technology. The university was first established as a college for advanced technical education in 1966 and then transitioned into a Technikon in 1979. With the restructuring of the higher education landscape, the institution became a University of Technology in 2004 and has seen significant growth in its activities and reach since that time. The university currently boasts close to 20 000 active students.

This is testament to the institution's dedication to education, innovation, and excellence in the field of technology. Such anniversaries are not only moments to reflect on past achievements but also to look forward to future advancements and contributions to the world of technology and academia.

Academic Achievements and Graduate Success

Throughout the years, VUT has and continues to offer an expansive catalogue of industry tailored undergraduate and postgraduate programmes which span the fields of Applied and Computer Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Human Sciences and Management Sciences. Our diverse Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) caters to a wide range of students with interests and ambitions in various disciplines.

Our innovative learning method facilitated by committed and esteemed thought leaders is the reason our institution has remained a reputable contributor to the country's knowledge edifice over the two decades. We proudly celebrate the vibrant tapestry of success woven by our esteemed alumni by shining a spotlight on the invaluable contributions of these accomplished individuals who once walked our halls and now stride confidently in diverse fields locally and internationally. From groundbreaking innovations to transformative leadership roles, our alumni exemplify the embodiment of our institution's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering lifelong connections.

An incubator of techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators

Located in a historical industrial hub, we have a vision to foster "Learning and Innovation for a Digitally Smart and Sustainable Industrial Progress and Socio-Economic Transformation." Our mission is to produce techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators who will serve as catalysts for a vibrant transformation of a flourishing and sustainable society, industry, and commerce. To achieve this, we provide technology-enhanced teaching and learning, quality living and learning communities, high-impact research and innovation that contributes to solving society and industry challenges.

Innovative Research

With several centres of excellence and NRF-rated professors, we pride ourselves with being associated with world-class academics and researchers who not only produce ground-breaking research that solves real life problems, but also empower aspiring researchers to engage the most experienced minds in several research fields as their aides.

We are the only university in South Africa that fully owns a Science and Technology Park which is home to the Technology Transfer and Innovation which is a strategic technology hub that endeavors to promote SMMEs and industrial competitiveness. Its strategic location (Sebokeng), available infrastructure as well as the current entrepreneurial culture make it an ideal implementing agency for driving regional government programmes within the Southern Gauteng region.

The VUT Law Clinic which is also housed at the same precinct, offers free legal services to the indigent members of the Emfuleni community on matters related to Domestic Violence, Maintenance, Divorces, Drafting of Wills, Children's Court, Social justice issues such as the right to housing and unlawful evictions as well as labour related issues especially unfair dismissal.

Industry Partnerships

The university proactively forges collaborations with industries to ensure relevance and applicability of education and research. These relationships with partners from industry, commerce, professional bodies and communities across South Africa also enrich our academic and research endeavors and enhance the value of our qualifications.

Community Engagement

The need to foster meaningful relationships between academic institutions and their surrounding communities, has been a focal point of discussion over the years. Through our department of Community Engagement, VUT continues to play a crucial role in promoting social responsibility, civic engagement, and sustainable development in the broader surrounding communities to create a positive impact and reciprocal and mutual learning for the benefit of social humanity. In addition to giving back to the community, such initiatives are aligned to, and underpinned by one of the University's strategic pillars of Socially Engaged Scholarship.

VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
Inspiring thought. Shaping Talent.



VUT celebrates academic excellence with vibrant and joyous Spring Graduations

By Staff Reporter

From 16 – 18 September 2024, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) held its Spring Graduations, marking a significant milestone for students as they celebrated their academic achievements. The ceremonies, held during the vibrant and inspiring Spring season, saw a total number of 1 194 of graduates from various disciplines across the university's four faculties, donning their caps and gowns in a momentous occasion filled with pride and anticipation for the future.

For three days, the Desmond Tutu Great Hall, was the place to be for family, friends, and university staff that gathered to honour the hard work and dedication of the students. These graduations not only were they a celebration of individual success, but also highlighted VUT's commitment to academic excellence, as well its role in advancing education and development in South Africa.

Delivering his congratulatory message at one of the ceremonies, Prof Khehla Ndlovu, the Vice Chancellor and Principal reminded all that graduation ceremonies are an important gathering in VUT's calendar. "They are an occasion where we come together not only to celebrate the exploits and accomplishments of our graduates, but also to showcase the institution's educational heritage and tradition."

Prof. Ndlovu also commended the graduates for their hard work and dedication, acknowledging the challenges they had overcome to reach this important milestone. "As you step into this new season of your lives, much like the Spring season, you are now ready to grow, flourish, and contribute to the world in new and dynamic ways. Armed with the knowledge and skills you have acquired, I have no doubt that you will make meaningful contributions to our society and lead with integrity, innovation, and compassion."

However, he hastily cautioned the graduates that graduations are not just the culmination of their academic efforts but also the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning, discovery, and impact. "As you leave here, I encourage you to continue seeking knowledge by hav-

ing a curious mind and a teachable heart. To emphasise this point, he borrowed from Sir Albert Einstein when he said: "When you cease to learn, you cease to grow. And when you cease to grow, you cease to improve, and get better."

Prof. Ndlovu also highlighted that these graduations coincided with VUT's celebration of twenty years as a University of Technology, adding that reaching that milestone was not only a significant achievement for the university, but also a testament to its unwavering commitment to education, innovation, and excellence in the field of technology. He concluded by encouraging graduates to contribute to the VUT Bursary Fund which aims to alleviate financial burdens faced by deserving students, enabling them to focus on their studies without worrying about economic constraints.

Notably, different ceremonies were graced by the presence of different distinguished guests and keynote speakers alike. Mr Vincent Mntambo, VUT Chancellor attended the morning session on 17 September, while the Chairperson of Council, Prof Mandla Radebe was among the attendees at the second session of the same day. Graduates from the Management Science Faculty were privileged to hear from a well-known academic and spiritual contributor, Dr TJC Slabbert who delivered a keynote address. The Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences, on the other hand welcomed back one of its own, Dr. Tozama Qwebani-Ogunleye, as the distinguished guest speaker during their session. Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye, currently the Programme Officer for Africa and Overseas Partnerships at the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), left a powerful impression on the Class of 2024, reminding them of the transformative power of education.

Throughout the three-day graduation ceremonies, the VUT Choir serenaded the attendees with their melodic voices and stellar performances.

Former VUT academic encourages graduates to pursue lifelong learning

By Qhawekazi Memani

On 16 September 2024, the Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences welcomed back one of its own, Dr. Tozama Qwebani-Ogunleye, as a distinguished guest speaker for the faculty's spring graduation ceremony. Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye, currently the Programme Officer for Africa and Overseas Partnerships at the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), left a powerful impression on the Class of 2024, reminding them of the transformative power of education.

A former Project Manager in the Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences at VUT (2016-2022), Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye has a rich academic and professional background. Her journey spans from being a lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology and a researcher at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to playing key roles in national and international science organizations, including Co-Chairing the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) in 2021-2022. Throughout her illustrious career, Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye has epitomized resilience, leadership, and lifelong learning, and she brought these themes to the forefront of her address.

In her moving speech, Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye congratulated the graduates, recognising the weight of their achievements and their responsibility as future leaders. "You are not just storytellers," she told them. "You carry narratives and lessons learned all the way." These words resonated deeply with the graduates, highlighting that their journey does not end here but continues as they navigate the world, armed with knowledge and experience.

Quoting Nelson Mandela, she emphasised that "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world and is the

best equalizer." She encouraged the graduates to embrace the attitude of a lifelong learner, stating that education is more than just achieving academic success; it is about the ability to continuously learn, unlearn, and relearn. Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye shared her insights on leadership, drawing from her own experiences as a leader in various science and research projects. She defined leadership as not only guiding others but also leading oneself. Central to her message was the concept of "collective leadership," which she explained is built on six core values: reflection, inquiry, empowerment, connection, strategy, and engagement. These, she stressed, are the pillars of effective leadership in a complex, interconnected world.

"Remember, our education is not determined by grace alone but by our ability to learn and unlearn," she reminded the graduates, encouraging them to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and innovation.

In closing, Dr. Qwebani-Ogunleye delivered a powerful message: "Congratulations, Class of 2024. Let's go out there and make our mark." Her words were met with applause, leaving the graduates inspired and motivated to step into the future with confidence, determination, and a sense of purpose.

Dr. Tozama Qwebani-Ogunleye's address not only celebrated the graduates' hard work and dedication but also served as a reminder of the importance of education, leadership, and continuous learning in shaping both individual lives and the broader world.





Celebrating achievements beyond challenges, trials, and tribulations

By **Nontobeko Moimane**

In his congratulatory message, Prof. Chenedzai Mafini, who was the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning at the time, emphasised the importance of graduations. He described them as solemn occasions that offer an opportunity to honour the remarkable achievements of our students, who have overcome numerous challenges and temptations to reach this significant milestone in their academic journey.

Prof Mafini also highlighted that the day marks the culmination of years of dedication, perseverance, and hard work. "You are being rewarded for your efforts," he said, acknowledging the resilience of the graduands. He further expressed his gratitude to the students for their unwavering commitment, for proving their worth, and for choosing to elevate themselves academically.

To the proud parents and guardians in attendance, he remarked: "Your presence here today is a testament to your love and support for these young people. You have walked this journey with them, and today you witness the fruits of that dedication." He also took a moment to commend the academics for their tireless efforts in guiding and nurturing the students through their educational journeys: "We appreciate your commitment and passion for education. You answered the call of duty and helped make today a reality."

Prof. Mafini concluded his address by sharing four invaluable life lessons that he encouraged the graduates to carry with them as they move forward into the next chapter of their lives:

- Never look down upon yourself.
- Take calculated risks.
- Relationships matter.
- Aim very high.

We stand proud of each graduate who has reached this incredible milestone. We congratulate you for your achievements and warmly welcome you into the esteemed VUT Alumni community. You have made us all proud—well done!

Cum Laude Graduates Shine at 2024 Spring Graduations

By Nontobeko Moimane



Cum Laude graduate: Valentine Raseyala

Cum Laude graduates, Theophillus Sekatane, recipient of a Diploma in Analytical Chemistry, and Valentine Raseyala, awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Information Technology, were among the few high achievers within the Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences during the 2024 Spring graduations. Their hard work and dedication culminated in well-deserved distinctions.

Ms. Raseyala, a two-time Cum Laude recipient, expressed deep gratitude for the financial support she received from the Signa Trust. She emphasised how this support not only eased her academic journey but also contributed to her mental health and career development. Offering advice to current students, she highlighted the importance of balancing academics and personal life, sharing her philosophy: "Si-

yafunda futhi siyagroover"—We study, and we enjoy life. She added, "This journey is not meant to be taken alone. Engage in activities beyond your academics, such as mentorship programs, to grow holistically."

Mr. Sekatane echoed similar sentiments about focus and perseverance. He attributed his success to hard work, continuously pushing himself to improve, and seeking help when necessary. "Dedicate yourself to your studies and always strive to better yourself," he advised, underscoring the importance of self-discipline and resilience. Both graduates stand as inspirations within the university community, proving that success is achieved through a combination of dedication, balance, and support.



Cum Laude graduate: and Theophillus Sekatane

African and Sign Language Services enhances graduation inclusivity

By **Tshepiso Kaibe**

In a groundbreaking move for inclusivity and accessibility, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) celebrated its 2024 Spring Graduations with a significant enhancement in language services. For the first time, graduation programs at VUT were not only available in English but were also translated into Sesotho and Sepedi. This initiative is part of a broader effort led by the University's African Languages Development Unit (ALDU) under the Centre for Academic Development (CAD).

Mr. Jacob Twice Thamaga, Manager of ALDU, emphasized that this initiative aligns with Section 30 of the Bill of Rights, which guarantees the right to use one's language and participate in cultural life. "VUT strives to give effect to this provision," Thamaga explained. "While English remains the primary language for formal ceremonies due to historical and practical reasons, our long-term objective is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning through multilingualism."

The VUT Language Policy highlights the university's commitment to linguistic diversity. According to the policy, English will continue to be used for formal events such as orientations and graduations. However, translation services for speeches and informational materials are now being offered in Sesotho and Sepedi, with other languages like sign language, Afrikaans, isiZulu, and Xitsonga provided when feasible.

In a further commitment to inclusivity, VUT has introduced sign language interpretation services at graduation ceremonies. Sign language interpreters Ms. Mahlodi Boyce and Ms. Pumza Sikumba attended all graduation ceremonies to facilitate communication for the hearing impaired, ensuring that all attendees can fully engage with the proceedings.

Thamaga highlighted that this approach is part of a broader strategy to support historically marginalized languages and promote language equity. "We are committed to developing and promoting historically marginalized languages while also ensuring that all students, regardless of their linguistic background, can fully participate in the university's academic and ceremonial life," he said.

The implementation of these multilingual services follows a successful trial period during other university events. The HR hearing process and the VUT-CAD Teaching and Learning conference both incorporated spoken interpreting in English, Sesotho, and isiZulu, with positive feedback from participants. Building on this success, VUT has now extended these services to its graduation ceremonies.

Moreover, VUT's commitment to language inclusivity extends beyond ceremonial events. The university has launched Sesotho and Sepedi Short Learning Programmes and is actively working on transforming signages across the campus to reflect a more multilingual environment. Efforts are also underway to make the university's website accessible in various languages.

These initiatives reflect VUT's dedication to fostering a more inclusive academic environment and addressing past injustices related to language and cultural representation. As Thamaga noted, "By integrating these services, VUT not only complies with national imperatives but also demonstrates a commitment to its core values of language equity, equality, and fairness."

The VUT 2024 Spring Graduations are not just a celebration of academic achievements but also a testament to the university's progressive approach towards multilingualism and accessibility. As the institution continues to develop and implement these services, it sets a

benchmark for other universities striving to create more inclusive and equitable educational environments.



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SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

*Ms. Mahlodi Boyce and
Ms. Pumza Sikumba*



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Well-known academic and spiritual contributor delivers keynote address at VUT Spring Graduations

By *Thabisang Thebeeapelo*



Guest speaker: Dr. T.J.C. Slabbert.

On the first day of graduation ceremonies of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT)'s Spring Graduations, graduates from the Management Science Faculty were privileged to hear from the distinguished guest speaker, Dr. T.J.C. Slabbert.

Dr. Slabbert, who is well-known for his perceptive contributions to the academic and spiritual domains, gave a powerful speech that had a profound effect on graduates. His speech gave a thought-provoking address in which he explored the frequently disregarded facets of human spirituality and personal development. He started out by talking about a recurring element in modern life: people's propensity to turn to spirituality mostly in times of crisis. Dr. Slabbert observed that while most people approach God seeking assistance, financial

support, employment, or healing from illness, very few truly desire to get to know Him.

Dr. Slabbert offered a moving passage of scripture to consider: Matthew 6:31. This passage, which reads, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" was used to highlight a common concern among graduates about their future. Dr. Slabbert observed, "You know what? If you know the Father and the Son, then you have no reason to say that. You will converse with them, and they will offer guidance. He advised graduates to redirect their attention from financial concerns to a more spiritual connection, suggesting that this connection would bring them the direction and comfort they need.

Late student graduates posthumously

By Tshepiso Kaibe

In a touching ceremony filled with both sadness and celebration, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) awarded a posthumous Advanced Diploma in Chemical Engineering to Nyakallo Julliet Damane on the 17th of September 2024. This emotional moment marked a tribute to a life cut tragically short but celebrated for its remarkable achievements.

Nyakallo Julliet Damane, originally from Botshabelo in the Free State, would have turned 28 this year. Her academic journey at VUT began in 2019 where she achieved a diploma in Chemical Engineering before she embarked on her Advanced Diploma, which she was set to graduate for at this Spring's Graduation ceremonies.

The ceremony was marked by a moment of profound respect as her mother, Mrs. Mmanana Moahloli, accepted the diploma on her behalf. As she walked onto the stage to receive the qualification, the audience rose in unison, acknowledging not only the academic achievement but also the deep sense of loss felt by all who knew Nyakallo.

Speaking after the ceremony, Mrs. Moahloli described the moment as bittersweet. "Although it hasn't been easy," she shared, "I have made peace with what has happened. I take solace in the fact that she made it. She achieved her dreams."

Neo Moahloli, Damane's cousin, also spoke with deep emotion about the deceased. "Nyakallo was more than just a cousin; she was a best friend and a sister to me. She had a passion for the finer things in life

and was enthusiastic about her future. It's heartbreaking that she was not able to see this day, but we know she had already paved her way in life and was excited for her graduation."

Damane's story, filled with promise and potential, is a reminder of the fragility of life and the enduring impact of a person's achievements. Her dedication to her studies and her aspirations resonates through the words of her family and the honour she received from VUT. As the VUT community paid tribute to Nyakallo, it was a moment of shared grief and pride, a testament to a life that, though brief, left an indelible mark on those who knew her.

In remembering Nyakallo Julliet Damane, the VUT family not only celebrated her academic accomplishments but also embraced the profound emotional connection that binds us all in our moments of joy and sorrow.

Academic institutions around the world, including VUT, posthumously awarding qualifications is a practice that honours students who pass away before completing their studies. This gesture not only acknowledges the student's dedication and hard work but also provides closure and recognition to their grieving families. Although the student may not be physically present to receive the degree, the award reflects the institution's respect for their academic journey.



The family of the late Nyakallo Julliet Damane

The Lone Graduate: A Journey of Perseverance and Triumph

By Puleng Maphisa



Thulile Simangele Magwaza

Graduating is a significant milestone in anyone's life, but when you are the only one in your class to do so, it becomes an experience marked by both pride and reflection. This is the story of Thulile Simangele Magwaza who was the sole recipient of a Postgraduate Diploma in Chemical Engineering at these Spring Graduations which took place from 16 – 18 September at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall.

While being the sole graduate can bring a mix of emotions, for the 27-year-old from Durban, that moment was a particularly special milestone, and a notable achievement that left her name into the records of VUT.

Reflecting on her journey, Thulile shared that it was anything but easy. Balancing her full-time role as a process controller in water treatment while pursuing her postgraduate studies was a challenge. She had applied for the postgraduate diploma in 2022 and began her studies in 2023. Despite her demanding work schedule, Thulile prioritized her education, seeing it as a perfect complement to her current profession.

"What encouraged me the most was being already in the industry while studying. It opened more opportunities to advance my career,

like climbing higher ranks within the company I work for," Thulile explained. "It really helps to stay current with the latest trends in water treatment, especially when it comes to ensuring the effective and safe cleaning of water."

Thulile also expressed her admiration for VUT, specifically observing how accommodating the lecturers were to students juggling work and studies. "Even when work was intense, they gave us the flexibility and support we needed to complete our assignments and meet our deadlines without feeling overwhelmed."

She closed by stating her heartfelt gratitude to her friends, colleagues, and family for their unwavering support. "Being away from home while studying was tough, but their understanding and encouragement gave her the strength to push forward." Looking to the future, Thulile revealed her ambitions to continue her academic journey. She has her visions set on pursuing a master's degree at the university she has long dreamed of attending. Though her matric marks once kept her from enrolling, her success at VUT has now opened doors to fulfilling that lifelong ambition.

Leadership and Scholarship: VUT SRC Deputy President Graduates

By Qhawekazi Memani

Amanda Manyi, the outgoing Deputy President of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), was among the hundreds of students who received their qualifications at the university's recent Spring Graduations.

Born and raised in Klerksdorp in the North West province, she graduated with a Diploma in Safety Management, highlighting a balance between academic success and leadership responsibilities. Her graduation marks a significant milestone not only for the student body which she leads, but also for her family, as she is the first in her family to graduate.

Her success serves as a powerful symbol of hope and perseverance, making her a torchbearer for both her fellow students and her family. As the first graduate, she embodies the transformative power of education and leadership, inspiring those around her to strive for excellence despite challenges. Amanda is now working as a Health and

Safety Intern at Clean Heat Solar Pty Ltd, where she is gaining valuable experience.

Elated about her achievement, Amanda feels like she has broken a generational curse. Along her journey she overcame numerous challenges which includes taking a three-year gap before pursuing her studies. She says she found her stride at university, making lifelong friends who turned into family. Throughout her journey, Amanda shared that her dad has been a constant source of inspiration and support.

Looking ahead, she is determined to further her studies and aims to become a Health and Safety Inspector. Her advice to others is clear: "Have a goal, stay focused, and never forget where you come from. Work both hard and smart, and never lose sight of your dreams." Amanda credits NSFAS for making her educational journey possible, ensuring she could chase her dreams without financial strain.

From DRC to the world, honed by VUT

By Qhawekazi Memani



Thierry Kakese

Thierry Kakese proudly graduated with a BTech in Electrical Engineering from VUT recently, marking the culmination of a long and determined journey. Thierry is an international student from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and his path to success has been filled with challenges, but also with a sense of deep accomplishment.

He currently serves as the Central Africa Regional Manager at WEG Africa, one of the largest electric motor manufacturers in the world. WEG Africa, with over 40 years of presence in the region, is a pow-

erhouse in the industry, producing over 21 million electric motors annually and offering a wide array of integrated products, including drives, transformers, and custom solutions. In this role, Thierry oversees operations across Central Africa, using his technical expertise and leadership skills to drive success – which in part he attributes to VUT.

On his graduation day he expressed a strong sense of achievement. "I feel a deep sentiment of accomplishment, with the devotion to achieving even more," he said. According to him, the road to earning his degree was not easy, particularly due to the demanding nature of his job. After completing his National Diploma (NDip), he spent years working in engineering roles, often in remote locations that required extensive travel which as a result, led to him taking eleven (11) years of hard work to finally achieve his BTech.

Through it all, his family stood by his side, especially his parents and wife. His late father was a constant source of motivation. "My father always encouraged me to upgrade my qualifications and aim high for the future," Thierry recalls, attributing much of his success to the support of his family.

As he looks to the future, Thierry plans to expand his knowledge beyond engineering. He is aiming to further his qualifications with studies in business administration and project management to enhance his leadership and management skills.

For fellow students and those inspired by his journey, he offers these words of encouragement: "Nothing is impossible as long as you believe in yourself and put in the essential effort to make it happen. Consistency is key—it brings sustainability."

Thierry's studies were initially funded by his parents in the DRC, and as he began working, he took on the responsibility of paying for the remainder of his education.

Thierry's story is one of perseverance, dedication, and the unwavering support of his family. His journey from the DRC to becoming a regional manager in a leading global company stands as an inspiration to anyone striving to reach their dreams, no matter the obstacles.

Nearly sixty-year-old VUT staff finally graduates

By *Thabisang Thebeeapelo*



Kwena Joseph Moabelo

The say dreams delayed, are not dreams denied! Exactly two years shy of sixty (60) Kwena Joseph Moabelo's dream has finally come true! The Senior Library Assistant in the Copyright and Digitization division at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) Library celebrated his latest academic milestone—a Diploma in Logistics which was bestowed on him at the recent Spring Graduations.

His story is not just one of personal achievement but an inspiring testament to perseverance and dedication. Reflecting on his journey, Moabelo shares, "I feel very proud of myself. This accomplishment proves that hard work and dedication truly pay off. In my case, I regard my academic journey as a dream delayed, not a dream denied." Moabelo, who is originally from Mokopane in Limpopo but now lives in Vanderbijlpark, Gauteng, pursued his diploma because he is passionate about transportation and procurement. "This course aligned perfectly with my interests, allowing me to hone my skills both personally and professionally."

Balancing full-time work and school duties is not easy. However, Moabelo was able to preserve this delicate balance by diligently organiz-

ing his work and school timetables. "I made sure I had a solid routine that helped me keep pace at work while staying on track with my studies," he says. His commitment was challenged further when he had to attend classes during working hours, but he made it a point to consult with lecturers to ensure he never missed any crucial lessons. Moabelo's role at VUT as a Senior Library Assistant in the Department of Library and Information Services allowed him to see directly the value of education. He added that it was motivating, but what truly kept him going was his family. "They were my biggest support system, encouraging me to push through, no matter how difficult or tiring the journey was."

Now a proud graduate, Moabelo is not about to sit back and relax. His focus is on furthering his knowledge. "My next goal is to enrol for my advanced diploma and continue to develop myself." He believes that progress is an ongoing process and is committed to take advantage of any chance to broaden his knowledge and skills. His journey is proof that it's never too late to achieve your dreams. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours!

Appreciation to the Graduation Organising Committee

By: Tayron Mhlongo



Like the previous ones, these VUT Spring Graduations ceremonies were nothing short of spectacular, pomp and class! This would not have been possible without months of meticulous planning and flawless execution by the Graduation Organising Committee.

The Committee, which comprises representatives from various departments, including the Registrar's Office, Marketing and Communication, Operations and Logistics, Protection Services, and all four Faculties, once again demonstrated a commitment to excellence. Behind every memorable moment, from the preparation of the venue to the seamless coordination of processes, there has been a group of people working tirelessly to ensure the success of the event. Their efforts have made it possible for our graduates and their families to experience a truly special occasion that marks the culmination of years of hard work, resilience, and determination.

For the Committee, careful planning is key. They believe in starting preparations well in advance, developing a detailed project plan with clear deliverables and deadlines that are monitored weekly to keep everything on track. Mrs. Palesa Ubane, a public relations practitioner responsible for event planning at VUT is one of the people who played a crucial role in this process, helping to secure required services on time and facilitating effective communication across departments to ensure smooth operations during the ceremonies.

Before each event, detailed memoranda were circulated to service departments, clearly outlining their responsibilities and what is needed for the ceremony. In the weeks leading up to graduation, several meetings with all key stakeholders took place with an objective to identify needs and address any concerns, ensuring that every detail is covered.

Maintaining a consistent brand image and message on social media

was also a need as it is essential for fostering a strong connection with the university community. To further enhance the graduation experience, live-streaming and digitization of the graduation program was introduced, along with automation of graduation processes. These technological advancements allow family and friends who cannot attend in person to share in the celebration, making the ceremonies more inclusive.

After each graduation, debrief meetings were held to evaluate their efforts, collecting feedback from management and through online surveys to understand what worked well and what can be improved for future ceremonies.

Reflecting on the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, Mrs. Ubane recalls, "We couldn't host normal graduations, leading to an outcry on social media. We introduced stage crossing ceremonies at the stadium, allowing students to collect their qualifications and take professional images with their families while maintaining social distancing. We were one of the few institutions to execute this project successfully." However, she says, that after that COVID-19-induced hiatus, we were happy to return to our jovial fully-fledged in-person graduation ceremonies.

Behind every degree conferred and every proud smile, the Graduation Organising Committee played a crucial role in making it all happen. Their professionalism, teamwork, and passion for making this milestone unforgettable are truly commendable. As we look back on this remarkable achievement, we extend our deepest gratitude to the entire team. The success of the graduations reflects your hard work and commitment, and we are all deeply appreciative of your contributions. Thank you for making these graduation ceremonies a resounding success!

New era for student turned caregiver graduates

Puleng Maphisa

At just 27 years of age, Nondumiso Luyanda Sithole has achieved a significant accomplishment, graduating with a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education from the Vaal University of Technology (VUT). However, the road to this accomplishment was anything but easy. Her story is one of sheer resilience, sacrifice, and the unbreakable bond of family.

Nondumiso lost her mother in 2018 while she was in her second year of studies. As devastating as this was, it marked the beginning of a challenging chapter in her life. She suddenly found herself in the role of a mother figure, raising her siblings on her own. Her sister, Khayelihle, was in matric at the time, and the burden of continuing her studies while grieving the loss of their mother was huge. Despite this, Nondumiso took it upon herself to ensure that her sister's future remained bright. She registered Khayelihle at VUT to pursue a degree in Analytical Chemistry.

Nondumiso's journey didn't stop there. Her younger brother, Lindokuhle Mahlobo, also looked to her for guidance and support. She made sure that he too, could pursue his education, registering him at VUT to study Safety Management. At a very young age, Nondumiso became not only a sister but a parent, guiding her siblings through the hardest time in their lives.

Through the most difficult moments, Nondumiso faced days when she had no food and had to juggle the responsibilities of being a student and a caregiver. But through it all, her determination never

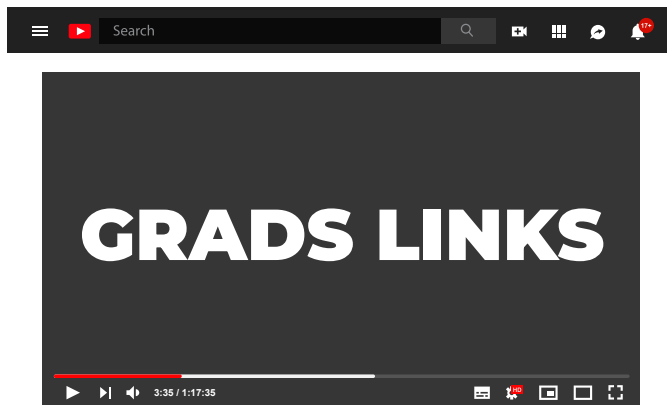
wavered. "My motivation was my siblings," she says. "I knew I was the only hope they had left, and I needed to set a good example for them."

Raised with strong values rooted in her Zulu culture, Nondumiso's moral compass kept her grounded. She held on to her cultural heritage and personal integrity throughout her journey, navigating the hardships with grace and determination. Her resilience is a testament to the strength she derived from her cultural values and the sense of responsibility she carried for her family.

Her academic journey was made possible through a bursary from the Gauteng City Region Academy (GCRA), which eased the financial burden and allowed her to focus on her studies. It was a lifeline that helped her navigate her difficult circumstances and fulfil her dream of graduating.

Today, Nondumiso's message to others who may be going through similar struggles is one of hope and faith. "Trust God, and be numb to the situation," she advises. For her, faith has been a guiding force in pushing through the challenges, and she encourages her peers to stay strong, no matter how hard life may seem.

Nondumiso Sithole's story is an inspiring example of what it means to overcome adversity with resilience and determination. Through her strength, she not only achieved academic success but also became a role model for her siblings and a role model for others.



Applied and Computer Science 16/09/2024

MORNING SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZoZ8HVImTQ>

Management Sciences 16/09/2024

AFTERNOON SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCeWwioogXQ>

Engineering and Technology 17/09/2024

MORNING SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpAQOprzG9Q>

AFTERNOON SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtbXO6S88-8>

Human Sciences 18/09/2024

MORNING SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6U3K-goUHaw>

AFTERNOON SESSION

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eAenW22NJOM>

Congratulatory Message Class of 2024



Ladies and Gentlemen, let me start by reminding all of us that graduation ceremonies are an important gathering in the calendar of the any institution of higher learning. They are an occasion where we come together not only to celebrate the exploits and accomplishments of our graduates, but also to showcase the institution's educational heritage and tradition.

Today is an extraordinary day, not only because we are celebrating your academic success, but also because we are doing so during the vibrant and inspiring season of Spring. So, dear graduates, just as Spring symbolizes new beginnings, growth, and renewal, your graduation represents the start of a new chapter filled with opportunities and promise. On behalf of the VUT Community, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of you for reaching this milestone.

Dear graduates, your academic journey has been marked by dedication, resilience, and determination. You have faced challenges head-on, and today, we applaud the strength of character that has brought you to this proud moment. You are the embodiment of the excellence that VUT strives to cultivate in all its graduates.

As you step into this new season of your lives, much like the season of spring, you are now ready to grow, flourish, and contribute to the world in new and dynamic ways. Armed with the knowledge and skills you have acquired, I have no doubt that you will make meaningful contributions to our society and lead with integrity, innovation, and compassion.

But I need to emphasise that graduation is not just the culmination of your academic efforts but also the beginning of a lifelong journey of learning, discovery, and impact. As you leave here, I encourage you to continue seeking knowledge by having a curious mind and a teachable heart. To borrow from Albert Einstein when he said, when you cease to learn, you cease to grow. And when you cease to grow, you cease to improve, and get better. Sir Isaac Newton was also agrees with him when he said knowledge has limits, that however educated we think we are, there is always more to discover, more to absorb and process. Remember that you are capable of great things and the world is waiting for the positive change you will bring.

Let me assure you that VUT will always be a place you can call home, and we look forward to watching your continued growth and success. Speaking of home, during the April graduations this year, we established the VUT Bursary Fund which aims to alleviate financial burdens faced by deserving students, enabling them to focus on their studies without worrying about economic constraints. Therefore, I challenge you make a contribution to this Fund – whatever amount. No amount is too small to make an impact on someone else's life.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you happy to know that your graduation comes at a critical time when VUT is celebrating twenty years as a University of Technology. Throughout these years, VUT has and continues to offer an expansive catalogue of industry tailored undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across our four faculties which caters to a wide range of students with interests and ambitions in various disciplines.

To the graduates: As I said, graduations are also a good time for reflection, and therefore, I encourage you to reflect on your journey thus far and recognize the support that you have received from your lecturers, academic advisors, fellow students, family, and friends. All of them have been instrumental in contributing to your career aspirations, even in the minimalistic way possible, and it is important to express your gratitude to them. Give them a BIG round of applause!

To the parents: Thank you for trusting VUT with the future of your children. Above all, thank you for supporting them throughout their study years – financially, emotionally and otherwise.

To the academic staff: My conscience is clear when I say had it not been your commitment to hold these graduates by the hand during their study years, this day would not have been possible.

Once again graduates, on behalf of the VUT community, I wish you all the best for a bright and fulfilling future. The world awaits your talents, ideas, and contributions. Go out there with confidence, courage, and a determination to make a difference. May your journey be filled with success, happiness, and countless opportunities.

THANK YOU

WELCOME TO THE MAVUTI SHOP,

The maVUTi Shop is a physical and digital space where VUT showcases and sells its products directly to customers. The shop's significance is delivering on Strategic Objective 8: To Improve the VUT Image, establish the VUT brand identity, communicate its values, and create a consistent brand experience and presence.

The maVUTi Shop is instrumental in promoting the new brand to staff, students, and Alumni. The visual application of the new merchandise inspires a renewed sense of belonging and assists in the buy-in of the VUT brand amongst internal and external stakeholders (brand equity). A variety of good quality branded merchandise will encourage brand loyalty.

The Marketing & Brand Manager, who resides in the Advancement Department, manages the maVUTi Shop and makes it accessible to all VUT stakeholders. In addition, the shop will assist with promoting and protecting our brand, ensuring adherence and compliance with the Brand Style Guide and the Brand & Corporate Identity Policy (available on the VUT website).

According to the Brand & Corporate Identity policy, all purchases by internal stakeholders (faculties, departments, units, SRC, and student organizations) are centralized at the maVUTi Shop. This 360-degree service ensures that the Marketing & Brand Manager has complete control over product quality and uniformity in terms of brand application.

PURCHASING PROCEDURES

No cash payments.

Card payments are accepted.

Internal transfers via requisition. Obtain a quotation from the maVUTi Shop as a supporting document and verify stock levels.

TRADING HOURS

Monday - Thursday:

09:00 - 15:30

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Vaal University of Technology, Vanderbijlpark Campus, AN Building



VUT Ekhaya Alumni



Alumni Relations Office / Pre-Alumni

The mandate of Alumni Relations is to engage and inspire VUT alumni to stay connected to their alma mater in support of the Vaal University of Technology's vision and mission to contribute to its success.

To make this a reality; the student experience is very important. It is best practice to meaningfully engage the student to build a long-sustained relationship before they graduate.




The Alumni Relations Office introduced Pre-Alumni to prepare students in this regard;

- To educate students on how to participate in pre-alumni activities
- To profile students (high-achievers) and assist them to grow their talents
- To introduce students to alumni networks, functions and events where they meet alumni
- To engage students in career-driven activities, seminars, mentoring and coaching, etc.
- To support students in their academic and extra mural initiatives to enhance memorable student experience
- To communicate and update students with university affairs that affect them and alumni as a student of Vaal University of Technology, you have joined thousands of VUT graduates known as "Ma-VUTi"

When you graduate, you will join our proud VUT graduates that we profile in our news bulletin, web, social media and publications.

We also profile you to advertise VUT faculty-based structures which links you to professional bodies where thousands of alumni are affiliated. The profiles would be precise to your qualification and career path (Milestones and achievements).

Your participation and engagement is highly valued.

-  VUT Pre-Alumni
-  VUT Pre-Alumni
-  VUT_Pre_Alumni



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